

NJBL Inc. Risk Management Guide

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Category One Injuries	3
Category 2 Injuries	3
Risk Management Program Outcomes	3
Standard of Care for Coaches	4
Reasonable Foresight	4
Key Baseball and Softball Rules	4
Baseball	4
Softball.....	5
Planning Effective Practices.....	5
Components of Active Supervision	6
Coach Participation in Practices	7
Warning of Inherent Risks.....	8
Facilities Safety	9
Concessions Safety.....	9
Worker Safety.....	9
Customer Safety.....	10
Facility Inspection	11
Sample Facilities Safety Checklist	11
Americans with Disabilities Act	12
Transportation of Athletes	13
Injury Response	13
Sample First Aid Guidelines.....	14
Closed Wounds	14
Open Wounds.....	14
Head Injury Follow-up.....	16
Coaching Background Checks.....	16
Screening.....	16
Education.....	17
Supervision.....	17
Weather Concerns	18
Summary and Conclusion	18

Introduction

This Risk Management Planning Guide has been prepared for NJBL baseball and softball coaches, and league officials as an educational tool to assist them in planning effective practices, games, and other activities associated with their NJBL programs. League leaders and coaches may use this planning guide in their discussions to determine who might be able to incorporate the appropriate material into their roles within their NJBL Baseball and Softball leagues.

The purpose of this Risk Management Planning Guide is to present some basic strategies designed to decrease the likelihood of injury to NJBL baseball players, softball players, team personnel, spectators, umpires, and anyone else associated with our NJBL program and to decrease the potential severity of injuries that do occur by responding appropriately. With that two-part goal in mind; let's examine two different categories of injuries that could occur in NJBL baseball or softball situations.

Category One Injuries

The first type of injuries, which we will call "Category One", are injuries resulting from the inherent risks of baseball and softball when they are played in their normal manner under normal circumstances. For example, while running the bases, a player might fall as he or she rounds first base due to a momentary lapse of attention as he or she steps onto the base and stumbles; or as a base runner approaches third base, the throw from the outfield might inadvertently hit the player in the shoulder. Neither of these injuries resulted from unreasonable, outrageous, dangerous behavior. Neither of these injuries occurred from behavior outside the rules. It is reasonable to anticipate that some injuries will occur through the normal course of participation. After all, it's not realistic to assume that we can eliminate every injury in NJBL baseball and softball competition. Category One injuries will, due to the very nature of baseball and softball participation, occur in even the safest of programs.

Category 2 Injuries

The second type of injuries, which we will call "Category Two," are injuries resulting from unreasonable, foreseeable circumstances. By definition, if the causes of these injuries are foreseeable, they should be foreseen and reasonable steps should be taken to prevent them. Can you see the difference? Category Two injuries are not the result of normal, typical participation (i.e., reasonable behavior); they result from someone's unreasonable behavior.

Effective risk management planning involves decreasing Category One injuries and eliminating Category Two injuries. Since these injuries are the result of behavior that is unreasonable, either through an act of omission or commission and the likely consequences are foreseeable, a potential allegation of negligence exists.

Risk Management Program Outcomes

Quite simply, this risk management planning framework is intended to facilitate the planning and implementation of various strategies designed to enhance program safety so that participants, spectators, and everyone else associated with the baseball or softball program can enjoy safe and successful experiences in their association with NJBL Baseball/Softball. This risk management planning framework is designed to enhance program safety by accomplishing several important outcomes, such as:

1. Increasing the awareness of the inherent risks and other safety factors associated with youth baseball and softball.
2. Enhancing communication of those inherent risks and other safety factors to the program's participants and leaders.

3. Facilitating the education of participants and program personnel concerning these risks and other safety factors and to make a sincere, good faith effort toward decreasing the probability of injury due to various factors, such as unreasonable and unsafe practices that are not inherently part of participation in youth baseball and softball.

All three of these proposed outcomes are designed to decrease the frequency of baseball and softball injuries that can result as part of normal participation. Item three is particularly concerned with preventing or eliminating situations that might lead to a claim of negligence since it involves factors not necessarily inherent within baseball and softball participation. No baseball or softball player ever intends to become injured, but injuries in sport are inevitable. Even though every sport injury has a cause or reason that it occurs, it is not realistic to believe that every injury could actually have been prevented. Perhaps theoretically each injury could have been prevented, but realistically we know that is just not the case. Quite simply, we will always have some injuries in baseball and softball. However, not all injuries that occur to participants and spectators are preventable. It is important for coaches and other program personnel to do everything they can within reason to prevent injuries.

Standard of Care for Coaches

The standard of care for youth baseball or softball coaches is to act as a reasonable person would have acted under the circumstances. The question of whether a certain behavior is an example of negligence is answered by applying the reasonable person test (RPT). The reasonable person test applied to a youth baseball or softball coach, for example, addresses doing what a reasonable youth baseball or softball coach would have done under the circumstances that existed at the time of the injury. More specifically, the RPT involves determining:

1. What a reasonable youth baseball or softball coach would have foreseen prior to the injury and
2. What a reasonable youth baseball or softball coach would have done in light of that foresight. It is very important to stress that the standard is one of reasonableness, not of perfection.

Reasonable Foresight

Although hindsight is often described as 20/20, reasonable foresight is perhaps not always so clear. Reasonable foresight, however, is expected to produce reasonable action to protect your young players from injury. You, as a NJBL baseball or softball coach, are not expected to guarantee against injury; you are expected to prevent unreasonable injuries. Therefore, the key to effective behavior as a NJBL baseball or softball coach, at least from a risk management perspective, is reasonable behavior. With all due respect to one's philosophy, values, opinions, knowledge, feelings, and everything else that goes into one's coaching, it is one's behavior that is the critical factor in preventing Category Two (negligent) injuries.

Key Baseball and Softball Rules

This section references baseball and softball rules that are designed, either in whole or in part, to protect the players from injury. For more detail, please refer directly to the NJBL rules printed in their entirety in the current NJBL baseball and softball rule books as well as the National High School Federation Rules and ASA Rules.

Planning Effective Practices

A key component in developing reasonably safe NJBL Baseball and Softball programs is to make a concerted effort to plan team practices well. This will not only save you time in the long run, but will ensure that you get the most out of your limited practice time and make your practices as safe as possible.

1. Preparation -- Be thoroughly prepared to teach and supervise the activities you conduct in practice. This should ensure that skills and drills are taught in a technically correct manner.
2. Purpose -- Know the purpose or objective of each activity and drill you conduct. Each drill should have an intelligent, meaningful purpose related to the sport of baseball or softball. Punishment drills are impossible to justify.
3. Warm-up and cool down -- Plan an appropriate warm-up specifically designed to prepare your players for the movements and activities to be conducted in practice, and plan an appropriate cool-down geared toward the actual movements and activities you have conducted.
4. Grouping -- Group athletes for instruction by the most appropriate means so as to enhance successful learning experiences within a safe environment. Although NJBL players are grouped by age for appropriate competitive reasons, it is important to structure practice activities to avoid potential mismatch situations in terms of safety. For example, consider the importance of utilizing your knowledge of players' height, weight, experience, skill, maturity, physical condition, psychological readiness, or a combination of these.

5. Instructions -- Specify key directions, explanations, demonstrations, or learning cues that are critical to proper execution of each drill or activity. The words and demonstrations you use to describe the model or ideal performance toward which the athletes should be striving are important. Choose these key words carefully so that the athletes will be able to focus on a few, clear terms in language and terminology they can understand. Be sure to identify the common errors and problems of execution. Pointing out these common errors could prevent athletes from being injured by performing the drills or activities incorrectly.
6. Feedback -- Provide relevant feedback to each athlete to correct improper or dangerous skill execution. Remember to communicate to individuals whenever possible rather than to an entire team or even several athletes.
7. Progressions -- Detail specific progressions to be learned as part of a practice or in relation to previous or future practices. Using appropriate progressions is essential to demonstrating that athletes were able to master a skill's components in sequence or simple skills prior to attempting more complex skills.
8. Diagrams -- Provide any diagrams that might help you clarify the design of a drill or activity. Remember, a picture is often "worth a thousand words," particularly if it's a good picture.
9. Conditioning -- Build in the physical conditioning that is necessary to perform the sport's skills safely. Physical conditioning is an important factor related to preventing fatigue-related injuries.
10. You -- Plan the best use of your role and the roles of any assistants you might have during practice and competition. Strive to interact with athletes as much as possible in a meaningful manner. Make the best use of your time and energy by selecting strategies most conducive to mastering the sport's skills. Whenever possible, try to have at least one other responsible adult with you at practices so that you are not the only adult present. In an emergency, it might be very helpful to have this other adult present.

Components of Active Supervision

Young participants require supervision when they are involved in any NJBL program. Make a good faith effort to implement the following items related to supervision.

1. Presence - Supervision begins with your physical presence. For example, players cannot be supervised if they are left alone by the coaching staff after a practice or game. Communicate with parents the importance of not dropping off their children at a practice or game until a coach or other responsible adult will be there to supervise. Although supervision begins with the physical presence of a responsible adult, it does not end there. The following items describe much more.
2. Quantity -- Provide an adequate number of coaches/supervisors for the circumstances (e.g., age, activity, etc.).
3. Contact -- Maintain visual contact with your athletes; do not allow your attention to be diverted.
4. Accessibility -- Maintain a position of immediate accessibility to everyone. Although you might be providing specific supervision to one athlete, remember to provide general supervision to the rest.
5. Rule Enforcement -- Consistently enforce all necessary safety rules that have been clearly explained to the athletes.
6. Intervene -- Stop all unsafe acts immediately; reasonable foresight stimulates action on the coach's part.
7. Interaction -- Assist and interact where necessary; don't just "be there."
8. Positioning -- If more than one coach is supervising, spread out in logical formation with overlapping fields of vision.
9. First Aid -- Provide appropriate and correct first aid or see that it is provided.
10. Emergency Plan -- Know and follow your program's medical emergency plan; see that your assistants do likewise. Be sure to have access to fast communication with emergency medical services, such as a cellular telephone.
11. Discipline -- Maintain control over the situation you are supervising; discipline where necessary. Curtail rowdy behavior.
12. Awareness -- Develop "withitness"; be constantly aware of what is going on within your area of supervision.

13. Diligence -- "Lifeguard" the area; supervise actively by being mentally and physically alert and responsive.
14. Attentiveness -- Keep your eyes and ears open; process information and respond accordingly.
15. Anticipation -- Attempt to anticipate the acts of your athletes before they occur, especially when an accident appears "ready to happen." This is not meant to imply that you have to be a mind reader; you do however need to demonstrate reasonable foresight.
16. Equipment Use-- Do not allow your athletes to use or abuse equipment in a manner for which it was not intended.
17. Debris -- Remove litter, glass, or other debris from the area of participation.
18. Overcrowding -- Do not allow too many athletes in one activity or one area at the same time; have athletes take turns, go to another station, or design other activities to avoid overcrowding.
19. Equipment and Facility Repair -- Look for signs of wear and tear on equipment and facilities. Correct minor problems if you can immediately; report other problems appropriately for repair and follow-up. Do not allow your athletes to use damaged or unsafe equipment or facilities.
20. Communication -- Talk to your athletes about safety. Strive to develop a safety-conscious attitude among your athletes.
21. Weather -- Be alert to relevant environmental conditions that might affect safe participation (e.g., wind, rain, snow, temperature, etc.).

Coach Participation in Practices

Some youth baseball and softball coaches participate in activities and drills with their athletes. Why do they do this? Reasons offered by coaches are because of:

1. Their interest in building a strong bond with their athletes,
2. Their desire to show their athletes how to perform an activity or drill by doing so themselves (i.e., more than just a demonstration),
3. Their interest in having their athletes see them being physically active, thereby serving as a positive role model, and
4. It's fun!

Although these and many other reasons are difficult to argue against, coaches should realize that their physical and active participation with their athletes sometimes leads to injury to the athletes. Does this mean that the coach is automatically at fault in causing the injury? Not necessarily, but let's realize that if a coach is involved in the athlete's injury, at least once, and perhaps more, of the following could occur:

First of all, the athlete is injured. Depending upon the severity of the injury, the athlete will miss time from practices and games. This is certainly not a desirable situation for either the athlete or the coach since both parties want a positive, successful and productive experience for each athlete on the team. Secondly, treatment of the injury will result in medical expenses needing to be paid. Hopefully, medical insurance, either a primary policy secured by the athlete's parents or a secondary policy purchased by the NJBL league, exists to help pay these bills. Thirdly, a negligence claim could be filed against the coach, the NJBL league and perhaps other parties in an attempt to obtain additional damages as a result of the athlete's injury. Hopefully, liability insurance exists to cover defense costs, settlement costs and perhaps even a jury award.

What are some factors that you, the baseball or softball coach, might consider as you think about whether it is reasonably safe for you to participate with your young athletes? Are there some common factors that you might be able to study from one situation to another? Yes. In considering whether it is reasonably safe to participate with your young athletes and how it is reasonably safe to do so, please consider:

1. whether your larger size poses a potential mismatch situation,
2. whether your superior strength poses a potential mismatch situation,
3. whether your superior skill poses a mismatch situation,

4. whether your superior knowledge of execution (e.g. strategy, etc.) poses a potential mismatch situation,
5. whether your more extensive experience poses a potential mismatch situation,
6. whether your participation will cause less participation for one or more athletes,
7. whether you will be able to provide adequate feedback (e.g., instruction and correction) related to your athletes' skill execution as you participate,
8. whether you will be able to supervise the participants in a reasonable manner as you participate,
9. whether you will be able to supervise the athletes not participating in a reasonable manner as you participate, and
10. whether there are any additional factors for you to consider that might be rather unique to your specific situation.

Warning of Inherent Risks

It is always advisable to meet with players and their parents to discuss and distribute important safety information. This meeting is a good opportunity to collect information on players' medical conditions, allergies, etc. Coaches could also post this warning, as discussed in the parents' and players' meeting, in dugouts:

Baseball and softball are reasonably safe activities as long as certain guidelines are followed. They are basically anaerobic activities that involve short rapid bursts of energy over prolonged periods of time. In a competitive environment, certain actions can occur very quickly and forcefully. If you have any physical condition that precludes you from participating effectively in baseball/softball, you should present your coach with a physician's written consent to participate with caution. By deciding to participate, you are acknowledging that you are physically fit enough to play in a reasonable manner. Please keep your coach informed about any minor acute or chronic injuries or conditions that you have. If you do not know the status of your physical condition, you are advised to have a physical examination by a physician.

Although the likelihood is minimized if you participate carefully, there is always the possibility of injury when you place extra demands on the muscles, bones, joints, ligaments, and other body parts in a competitive situation. Injuries that can occur in baseball/softball include but are not necessarily limited to the following: blisters, muscle strains, ligament and joint sprains, joint soreness, abrasions, contusions, stress fractures, broken bones, spinal cord injuries involving permanent paralysis, and even death. Injuries can be sustained from a variety of sources such as but not necessarily limited to the following; being struck by a batted or thrown ball; being struck by a bat; colliding with a teammate, opponent, or other obstacle; contact with a base; and slipping or falling to the ground when running or fielding. However, if you exercise care for your safety and the safety of your teammates and opponents, the likelihood of such injuries can be greatly reduced. Be sure to obey consistently the following safety guidelines:

1. Always stretch and warm up appropriately before practices and games.
2. Always stretch and cool down appropriately after practices and games.
3. Never participate in rowdy behavior.
4. Never swing a bat unless you are at the plate, in the on-deck circle, or other appropriate area.
5. Never throw a ball to another player until you have eye contact with that player.
6. Report to your coach all injuries as soon as they occur.
7. Always wear a helmet when batting or running bases.
8. Watch where you are moving to avoid collisions with teammates, opponents, or other obstacles.
9. Demonstrate proper sliding skills to avoid injuries from the sliding into a base or an opponent.
10. "Call the ball" to decrease the likelihood of colliding with a teammate.
11. Be alert when teammates and opponents are batting; stay behind protective screening when appropriate.
12. Follow your coaches' instructions carefully on how to execute baseball/softball skills and procedures.

Do you have any questions? If so, be sure to ask your coach at any time.

By participating in our NJBL Baseball/Softball program, you are acknowledging that you have read the preceding warning. Your participation indicates that you fully know, understand, and appreciate the risks inherent in playing baseball/softball. You are also acknowledging that you are physically fit to play baseball/softball competitively, and you are voluntarily participating in this NJBL program.

Facilities Safety

Athlete Safety and Spectator Safety:

1. Inspection of Field -- Certain parts of a practice and game facility should be inspected each time prior to use. A quick check of the field will determine whether holes have appeared in the field, glass bottles have been broken, etc., since it was last used. Teach players to look for potential problems with the field and to report these concerns to you at any time.
2. Inspection of Other Areas -- Other areas, such as spectator seating areas, walkways, etc., should be checked prior to games to determine whether unreasonable hazards exist.
3. Correction of Facility Problems -- Remedy any problems you can immediately; for other more serious problems that require additional attention, be sure to communicate with the appropriate maintenance personnel so the problem will be repaired.
4. Non-use of Facility -- Be sure not to use a facility that is in need of repair if using it in its current condition could lead to an injury; in other words, do not use an unsafe facility until it can be made reasonably safe.
5. Location of Spectators -- Place spectators, whether it involves bleachers or no bleachers, in areas where they will receive reasonable protection from injury and where they will not present an unreasonable risk of injury to participants, such as from collisions between players and spectators if spectators are standing very close to a baseline.
6. Temporary Seating -- If temporary or portable spectator seating is used, determine that it is erected properly and positioned appropriately.
7. Restricted Areas -- If players and spectators are restricted from certain areas, signage, barricades, fences, and ushers might be necessary to enforce this restriction.

Concessions Safety

Some NJBL teams operate food concessions to raise money for their leagues. When planning these concessions operations, organizers should devote their attention to the safety of their concessions workers as well as the safety of their customers.

Worker Safety

Most concession workers are either volunteers who have a personal attachment to the their team's program, such as parents, or part-time workers who can earn a few dollars by helping out at the concession stand. In most cases, these individuals are not full-time food service professionals who have been trained in concession operations. Depending upon the specific nature of the equipment contained in a concession stand, workers must be adequately trained so they will not injure themselves or others as they perform their duties operating equipment, cooking food, etc. In some cases, it might be helpful to train some workers to operate food preparation equipment, other workers to take orders at the counter and collect money, etc. This division of labor, if an adequate amount of workers and space are available, could enable individuals to gain the expertise needed to perform their duties in a safe manner. Be sure to answer your concession workers' questions about equipment operation and safety, and be sure to oversee their use of the equipment until you are satisfied that each person can perform his or her duties safely.

Pay particular attention to supervision of the concession stand area to deter theft and potential physical harm to workers. Avoid having just one person work in the concession stand in

the early morning hours or late night hours when others are not around. Try to schedule cleaning, stocking, and other work that might be done when games are not underway for times when more than one worker can be present and when adequate supervision can be planned. Be sure to have telephone access in the event that police or other emergency personnel need to be called.

Customer Safety

Customer safety consists of three main areas: (1) preventing injuries related to the inappropriate operation of equipment as described above with regard to workers, (2) preventing injuries related to the physical condition of the concession area, such as tripping hazards or slick floor surfaces, and (3) preventing illnesses or other negative reactions to inadequately cooked foods, spoiled foods, etc.

(1) Equipment Operation

Similar to the above discussion concerning the prevention of injuries to concession stand workers, customers, spectators, or bystanders could be injured from machines or equipment that are not operated correctly, machines or equipment that malfunction, and machines or equipment that are not supervised or controlled correctly. Therefore, these machines and equipment should be placed in locations that do not pose unreasonable dangers to customers, and their use and access must be controlled and supervised. For example, gas or charcoal barbecue grills should not be placed in areas where customers or bystanders will be injured by walking into them, knocking them over, etc.

With regard to the safe operation of gas barbecues, be sure the burner ports are free of rust, dirt, debris, carbon, etc. Wash the complete burner assembly with warm, soapy water. Regularly test the propane fittings and hose that are connected from the tank to the barbecue to detect potentially dangerous leaks. To do this, make a strong solution of soap and water. Never check for leaks using an open flame. Turn on the propane cylinder valve and use a brush to spread the soap and water over all connections. Any leaks will create bubbles. If you detect a leak, close the propane cylinder valve immediately and have the unit checked and repaired by a qualified propane supplier. After you have determined your gas barbecue is safe to operate, be sure to light it safely. Always have the lid of the barbecue open when lighting and have the match or lighter ignited before turning on the gas. Do not move the barbecue after it has been lit. When finished, turn off the propane cylinder valve and the barbecue gas control valve. Do not use any barbecues, gas or charcoal, indoors or in an enclosed space. Always store propane cylinders outdoors in an upright position.

(2) Concession Area Physical Condition

The concession stand area should be kept in good repair and should be well maintained so patrons as well as workers do not suffer physical injuries from dangerous conditions that might exist. Timely inspections should be performed with a critical eye to determine that the area is reasonably safe. Potential tripping hazards should be prevented or eliminated when discovered. Floor surfaces should be kept dry and uncluttered. Spills should be mopped immediately upon discovery so no one slips and falls. Avoid placing drink coolers and display racks high, on uneven surfaces, or anywhere they might fall and injure someone. Exterior grounds, walkways, and counter areas should be level and well maintained, free of holes, and other items that could cause falls and other injuries.

(3) Food Storage, Handling, and Preparation

Perhaps the main concern of your concession customers is that they will not become ill by purchasing and eating the food you provide. Primary considerations include proper refrigeration, cooking foods well, and handling foods properly. Although many people appreciate the need to handle and cook meat appropriately, similar precautions must be taken with virtually all foods, including milk and other dairy products, cut melons, and cooked potatoes, beans, rice, and pastas. Check recommended temperatures for storage of meats, condiments, and all other items that need to be refrigerated so that spoilage does not occur. Do not keep items beyond the printed expiration dates. If in doubt, throw it out. Be sure workers wash their hands with soap and water before handling food so that dirt, germs, and other undesirable elements are not transmitted. Also be sure workers wash their hands appropriately after handling raw meats and any other food that might contaminate some other food. Consider using paper towels rather than cloth towels to dry your hands and clean up concession stand surfaces. Use plastic or other non-porous cutting boards. Wash plates, utensils, and cutting boards that held raw meat and poultry in a dishwasher or hot, soapy water before using them again for cooked foods to guard against the possibility of cross-contamination. If possible, consider having one person handling the raw foods and another person handling the cooked ones.

Be sure meats are cooked thoroughly using a metal stem thermometer capable of reading from 0-220 degrees Fahrenheit (°F). Meat or poultry cooked on a grill often browns fast on the outside, so be sure all meats are cooked thoroughly. Use your thermometer to ensure hamburger, veal lamb, and pork reach a minimum internal temperature of 160°F. Cook ground poultry to at least 165°F. Prior to cooking, ground beef must be kept frozen or below 45°F. Once cooked, ground beef must be kept hot at 140°F or above at all times. To enable the thorough cooking process, turn all raw meats at least twice while cooking and flatten with a spatula. Cook beef steaks and roasts that have been tenderized, boned, rolled, etc., to an internal temperature of 160°F for medium and 170°F for well done. Whole steaks and roasts should be cooked to 145°F for medium rare. Whole poultry should be cooked to 180°F in the thigh, while breast meat should be cooked to 170°F. Be sure to cook all meat and poultry at the site. Partial cooking ahead of time allows bacteria to survive and multiply to the point that subsequent cooking cannot destroy them.

Facility Inspection

As stated earlier, it is always wise to inspect your practice and game facility on a timely basis to determine whether some repairs or improvements need to be made. It is also important to document your inspection routine for future reference. Here is a sample of baseball and softball facility checklist form; be sure to make one for your specific practice and game facilities.

Sample Facilities Safety Checklist

Area	Condition*	Corrections (if any)
Pitcher's mound	A/N	_____
Home plate	A/N	_____
First base	A/N	_____
Second base	A/N	_____
Third base	A/N	_____
Infield area and base paths	A/N	_____
Outfield area	A/N	_____
Fences	A/N	_____
Dugout areas	A/N	_____
Protective screening	A/N	_____

Bleachers/seating areas	A/N	_____
Aisles/walkways	A/N	_____
Restrooms	A/N	_____
Concession areas	A/N	_____
Parking areas	A/N	_____
Other (_____)	A / N	_____
Other (_____)	A / N	_____
Other (_____)	A / N	_____

Inspection Completed By (Name) _____ Date _____

A = Acceptable/Satisfactory (good or very good; no improvements needed)
N = Not acceptable as is (necessary improvements noted under "Recommendations")

Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) makes it illegal for both public and private entities to discriminate on the basis of disability in the areas of employment, public services, public accommodations, transportation, and telecommunications. The ADA applies to all people with physical or mental impairments that substantially limit one or more major life activities. Such activities include walking, talking, hearing, seeing, breathing, learning, performing manual tasks, and caring for oneself. The law applies to individuals who have a history of such impairment as well as those who are perceived as having such an impairment. In some cases, people who have relationships or associate with individuals with disabilities are also protected.

The ADA mandates that no individual shall be discriminated against on the basis of disability "in the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations of any place of public accommodation." Examples of these categories include potential participants and spectators of NJBL baseball and softball programs. "Public accommodations" are not simply publicly owned or governmental facilities; they are places and facilities frequented by members of the public. These provisions became effective January 26, 1992, so everyone should be "on board" by now. Some key elements related to accessibility to programs and facilities include:

1. Program Policies and Practices -- Modifications to policies or practices must be made where necessary to allow people with disabilities to enjoy the services of public accommodation. Modifications in policies, practices, and procedures must be made where necessary to avoid discrimination.
2. Existing Physical Barriers -- Physical barriers in existing facilities of public accommodation must be removed if removal is readily achievable (i.e., can be easily accomplished and carried out without much difficulty or expense). Facility owners/operators must make reasonable accommodations to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. Places of exhibition or entertainment, such as theaters, auditoriums, and stadiums, as well as places of recreation, are specifically identified as places of public accommodation, regardless of whether they are publicly or privately owned. If public accommodations cannot remove barriers, alternative methods of providing the services and goods must be offered, if those methods are readily achievable. Public accommodations may not charge money to cover the cost of providing an alternative method of service.
3. Alterations to Existing Facilities -- When alterations to primary function areas are made, they must be accessible. In addition, an accessible path of travel to the altered area (and the bathrooms, telephones, and drinking fountains serving that area) must be provided to the extent that the added accessibility costs are not disproportionate to the overall cost of the alterations.
4. New Construction -- All new construction in public accommodations and commercial facilities must be accessible. Elevators are generally not required in buildings under three stories or with fewer than 3,000 square feet per floor, unless the building is a shopping center, mall, health care provider's office, or transportation terminal. Public accommodations that are places of assembly,

such as theaters and auditoriums with more than 300 seats, must provide a number of wheelchair seating spaces dispersed throughout the seating area.

5. Integration Within Programs -- A public accommodation may not discriminate against a person with a disability by refusing service or denying participation in an activity. To achieve the goal of equal participation, services, goods, and activities must be provided in the most integrated setting possible. Individuals with disabilities cannot be required to accept separate or special services. (Excerpts from The Americans With Disabilities Act: Your Personal Guide to the Law, Washington, DC).

Transportation of Athletes

Many NJBL programs involve some type of travel. In planning for the safe travel of your participants, consider the following items.

1. Mode of Transportation -- Attempt to plan the safest means of transportation you can for your team's travel. People are often uncomfortable discussing "what-ifs" or "worst case scenarios", but ignoring certain travel planning details simply because they might be uncomfortable in nature could prove to be catastrophic in the event of a serious automobile accident.
2. Insurance -- Know that vehicles used are adequately insured by their owners in the event of a serious accident.
3. Drivers -- Recruit drivers who have safe driving records and who are mature and serious about their driving responsibilities. Use drivers with several years of driving experience whenever possible. Determine that drivers are legally licensed and have no restrictions placed upon their driving that they might violate during their transportation of NJBL players, such as license suspension for drunken driving, vision correction restriction but they have no eye glasses or contact lenses at the current time, etc.
4. Condition of Vehicles -- Utilize vehicles that are mechanically and functionally sound to minimize the likelihood of vehicle malfunction that could lead to injury. Whenever possible, use vehicles that have emergency equipment, such as a tire jack, spare tire, flashlights, etc., to minimize the effects of roadside emergencies.
5. Supervision -- Encourage drivers to maintain control over their passengers while traveling so that the driver's attention is not hindered.
6. Multiple Vehicles -- When traveling with more than one vehicle, consider traveling together or at least with two vehicles together in the event of a traveling emergency.
7. Communication -- If possible, have a cellular telephone available in each vehicle so that roadside assistance can be summoned quickly if needed.

Injury Response

Since some injuries are inevitable in baseball and softball settings, you must be properly prepared to deal with the inevitable. Consider the following points carefully as you make your plans.

1. Health Status -- Know the health and physical condition of your players, and act appropriately with this information. For example, if one of your players is diabetic, you need to have that information; you also need to know in advance how to respond to complications that might arise from this and other medical conditions that might exist among your team.
2. Medical Emergency Plan -- Know what to do in the event of a medical emergency before it happens. Basically, your plan should address who is expected to do what; keep it simple. The last thing you want to occur in a medical emergency is for you or one of your assistants to say, "What do you think we should do?" Implement the medical emergency plan. Make sure you have immediate phone access to call 911. In the meantime, implement appropriate first aid measures until help arrives. Instruct your players where and how to access 911; they can be very helpful in an emergency situation, particularly if you are the injured person.

3. First Aid -- Be able to offer appropriate emergency first aid to injured players or see that it is offered in a timely and correct manner. Stay within the boundaries of your skills; know when to seek additional help by being able to recognize the potential seriousness of an injury. If in doubt, recommend follow-up care to be provided by a physician.
4. Supplies -- Have necessary emergency first aid materials and supplies available in a first aid kit that is readily accessible.
5. Consent-to-treat -- Obtain written permission from a parent to obtain necessary medical treatment for your players in the event the parent is unavailable to grant such permission when it is needed. Remember to take these signed forms with you to both home and away games.
6. Reporting -- Develop a simple system for accurately reporting the important information related to injuries to your players. Periodically study these injury report forms to determine trends and areas of concern, if any. Remember, all injuries are to be reported to the NJBL, in writing, within 48 hours. Familiarize yourself with our rules, procedures and policy regarding any type of injury, especially head injuries.

Sample First Aid Guidelines

The following are some sample emergency response guidelines that could be helpful in responding appropriately when injuries occur to your participants.

Please note: This is a brief summary of some key first aid points adapted from the National Safety Council's First Aid and CPR, published by Jones and Bartlett. For more detailed information, please refer to a comprehensive first aid manual. Whenever you are in doubt, seek medical attention. For additional information in your specific area, please contact individuals in your community who might be willing to serve as a resource, such as physicians, emergency medical technicians (EMTs), or athletic trainers.

Closed Wounds

Contusion (bruise) -- results when a blunt object strikes the body. The skin is not broken and no blood appears on the skin's surface. This is the only type of closed wound. Signs and symptoms include discoloration, swelling, pain, redness, and loss of use.

First Aid for Closed Wounds

Control bleeding by applying ice and an elastic bandage immediately to the injury. Cold constricts blood vessels and slows bleeding. Compression over the area also helps decrease bleeding. Suspect and check for a fracture. Elevate the injury above the victim's heart level to decrease swelling and pain. In general, remember the acronym "RICE" -- Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation.

Open Wounds

- Abrasion -- scraped skin resulting in partial loss of the skin surface. It has little bleeding but can be very painful and serious if it covers a large area or if foreign matter becomes embedded in it.
- Incision -- wound is smooth-edged and bleeds freely. The amount of bleeding depends upon the depth, location, and size of wound. There may be severe damage to muscles, nerves, and tendons if the wound is deep.
- Laceration -- skin cut with jagged, irregular edges. It can bleed freely.
- Puncture -- a stab wound from a pointed object. The entrance wound is usually small.
- Special treatment of the puncture wound may be required when the object causing the injury remains impaled in the wound.

- Avulsion -- the tearing of a patch of skin or other tissue that is not totally torn from the body and leaves a loose, hanging flap. Avulsions can involve such body parts as ears, fingers, and hands.

First Aid for Open Wounds

Remove clothing that might be covering the wound. Protect against exposure to AIDS or hepatitis by wearing latex or vinyl gloves or using other methods of protection, such as extra layers of dressings, plastic material, etc. Wash the wound. Control bleeding by applying pressure while using a dry sterile dressing or clean cloth over the entire wound. Cover the wound with a sterile gauze dressing and bandage. Do not remove impaled (penetrating) objects. Seek medical assistance if cleaning or control of bleeding is difficult to accomplish.

- Bone, Joint, and Muscle Injuries Fracture -- A break or crack in a bone; open (when the skin is broken and bleeds externally) or closed (when the skin is not broken). If bleeding, cover the wound carefully before splinting. When splinting possible fractures, immobilize the joints above and below the fracture site. Splint with a pillow, cardboard, boards, newspaper, or other rigid objects. Position the injured part slightly above heart level, and apply cold packs to help swelling and pain. Seek medical attention immediately.
Dislocation -- Dislocations occur in joints when they are pushed beyond their normal range of motion. Look for deformity of the joint, severe pain in the joint, swelling around the joint, discoloration around the joint, and inability to move the injured area. Splint as if a fracture. Do not replace the joint since nerve and blood vessel damage could occur. Seek medical attention immediately.
- Ankle Injuries -- It is often difficult to tell the difference between a severely sprained ankle and a fractured ankle. Treat the injury as a fracture until you can obtain the advice of a physician. Identification often cannot be made on the basis of appearance or the amount of pain. Apply ice wrapped in a towel. Apply snug, but not too tight, compression by elastic bandage. Elevate the injury above the level of the heart. Do not apply heat until at least 48 hours after the injury. Whenever you are in doubt about the exact nature of the injury (i.e., sprain vs. fracture), seek medical attention.
- Muscle Injuries -- A muscle strain, also known as a muscle pull, occurs when the muscle is stretched beyond its normal range of motion, resulting in a muscle fiber tear. A muscle contusion, also known as a bruise, results from a blow to the muscle. Once again, apply ice wrapped in a towel, snug compression with an elastic bandage, and elevate the injured area above the level of the heart.
- Head and Neck Injuries - Any head injury may be accompanied by a spinal injury. If you suspect a spinal injury, keep the head, neck, and spine in the same alignment you found originally.
- Unconscious victims -- Assume that all unconscious victims of head injury have a spinal neck injury. Open the airway by the jaw thrust method to check for breathing. Do not bend the neck. Give rescue breathing if needed. Stabilize the victim's head and neck as you found them. Check for severe bleeding. Cover any bleeding with a sterile dressing.
- Do not stop the flow of blood or fluid from the ears. Do not remove any object imbedded in the skull. If there are no signs of a neck or spinal injury, try to place the victim in the coma position (on victim's side, knees bent, head supported on one arm).
- Conscious victims -- Check for spinal injury by noting arm or leg weakness or paralysis. Stabilize the head and neck as they were found to prevent movement. Do not block the flow of cerebrospinal fluid since it may add more pressure to the brain. Ask the victim what day it is, where he or she is, his or her home address, etc. Another useful test is to give a list of five or six numbers or items, and ask the victim to repeat them to you in the proper order. If the victim cannot answer these simple questions, there may be a significant problem. Failing on these short-term memory tests indicates a concussion.

Head Injury Follow-up

A blow to the head might produce a headache, nausea, vomiting, drowsiness, vision problems, mobility problems, speech problems, seizures, or convulsions. If a headache lasts more than one or two days or increases in severity, seek medical attention. If nausea lasts more than two hours or if vomiting begins a few hours after the injury, seek medical attention. Seek medical attention immediately if the victim is disoriented or confused, experiences double vision, if the eyes fail to move together, if one pupil appears to be larger than the other, if the victim has mobility problems or is unsteady walking, has slurred speech or cannot talk, or if the victim has muscle spasms, seizures, or convulsions. A very good "rule of thumb" is to seek medical attention immediately whenever you are in doubt about a head injury or neck injury.

Coaching Background Checks

Although it is relatively rare, adults in leadership positions over children and adolescents in sport programs sometimes misuse their positions of authority by exerting various forms of abuse. Examples of abuse, all of which are unacceptable, include verbal abuse, emotional abuse, physical abuse, and even sexual abuse. It is very important that all volunteers and others associated with NJBL teams understand which behaviors are inappropriate, unprofessional, unethical, and illegal and refrain from demonstrating any of these negative behaviors as they perform their program-related duties. All forms of abuse must be diligently prevented and, if they occur, terminated immediately. Some forms of abuse, such as sexual abuse, will require additional follow-up, such as with local law enforcement officials.

Prevention is the key to dealing proactively with abuse in all youth sport programs, including the NJBL. A comprehensive prevention program has the following three steps: (1) screening, (2) education, and (3) supervision. Let's briefly examine each of these components.

Screening

Many individuals working in sport programs, particularly youth sport programs such as the NJBL, serve in a volunteer capacity. Because of this, many sport organizations do not feel that they can ask their volunteers to submit to thorough screening processes, such as completing application forms, obtaining letters of reference, or submitting to thorough background checks. Many volunteer organizations need all the volunteers they can obtain, so they are reluctant to develop screening processes that might be perceived negatively by prospective volunteers. In addition, there are financial costs associated with thorough screening processes. However, the costs attached to haphazardly accepting any and all volunteers without some basic screening could be far greater.

A screening process used with prospective volunteers can be helpful in at least two important ways. First of all, the mere presence of a screening process can function as a deterrent to prospective volunteers to your program. If prospective volunteers realize they will be exposed to a screening process that will examine whether they have criminal backgrounds, particularly with crimes against children such as physical or sexual abuse, a certain percentage will shy away from submitting applications to serve as volunteers. "Not being found out" will serve in many cases as an effective deterrent. Secondly, an effective screening program will detect and therefore eliminate those individuals with the types of backgrounds our NJBL league might deem inappropriate to work with young participants. A discussion with your local law enforcement agencies will help you determine the specific nature of the information you believe is appropriate to gather, readily available for you to obtain, and relevant to disqualify someone from working with children, such as but not necessarily limited to physical abuse, sexual abuse, and other violent crimes.

Your team should also discuss and determine whether you want to disqualify someone who has received DUI (driving under the influence) or DWI (driving while intoxicated) convictions,

since transporting youth players is a common occurrence in youth sports. What other offenses will you determine should disqualify someone from volunteering with your team? Be as specific as you can be, and make a concerted effort to draw a close and direct link between the relevant, unacceptable behavior you discover and your decision to disqualify that volunteer. If you cannot make a close enough connection, then ask yourselves if it's fair to disqualify the prospective volunteer.

Although criminal background information is public information, it is important to treat this information and the individuals to whom it pertains to with appropriate discretion and confidentiality. Much of this information is sensitive and potentially embarrassing. You are not out to destroy one's reputation or career; you are, however, out to determine whether your prospective volunteers have anything in their past that might disqualify them from working with the young participants on your team. It is also a good idea to develop a simple appeal process in which a disqualified volunteer can challenge the accuracy and relevance of the information that led to his or her disqualification.

In addition to conducting criminal background checks in conjunction with local and state law enforcement agencies, you should also check with references provided by the prospective volunteers and even some individuals whose names were not provided by the prospective volunteers. Sometimes a name is conspicuous by its absence, such as an immediate supervisor from a previous position. Talk to several people to get a variety of perspectives. Screening prospective volunteers should be taken just as seriously as screening prospective employees for paid positions at your place of business. Be diligent, fair, and discreet. It's a task that can take some time, but it's definitely time well invested.

Education

In addition to developing a prospective volunteer screening process that might involve an application, letters of reference, and a background check, it then becomes important to develop an educational component geared toward preventing and eliminating various forms of abuse, such as verbal abuse and emotional abuse. In addition, education tends to increase one's awareness of and sensitivity toward even more serious forms of abuse, such as physical and sexual abuse. Helping coaches learn how to correct players' skill execution and how to motivate players with methods other than screaming and embarrassing can be extremely beneficial. Often these undesirable teaching and coaching strategies are done largely because an individual simply does not have a broad and thorough preparation in teaching and coaching methodologies. This type of valuable in-service training can provide NJBL coaches with the educationally sound strategies that will enable them to become effective and respected coaches.

Supervision

Another important element in preventing and eliminating inappropriate behavior by coaches is supervision by program officials, such as league officers, volunteer coordinators, etc. Although these individuals may also be volunteers, they have specific oversight and supervisory duties with regard to the operation of their leagues or events. Because of these responsibilities and functions, they have the opportunity and responsibility to supervise, observe, communicate, and otherwise provide the necessary interaction to intervene before minor, borderline, or potential abuse escalates to an inappropriate level. Often a word of caution can impact one's awareness in a significant manner. For example, a league official might communicate to a volunteer coach that the coach has a tendency to touch young players in a manner that might cause concern among players. Certain types of touching are acceptable and other types of touching are not. Explaining how this type of contact can be altered can be extremely eye-opening to an inexperienced coach. Sometimes just talking about a potential concern can solve an issue that could turn into a serious problem. Observation and interaction by peers or mentor coaches can be as effective as or even more effective than the supervision provided by league officials. Peer pressure can be utilized effectively.

This type of broad involvement by everyone within the youth sport program can also be extremely beneficial in planning and delivering the educational component described above. In spite of your best efforts in the area of prevention, an incident of abuse might occur in which you must take immediate corrective action. This action might involve termination of the volunteer and even notification of the local law enforcement authorities. Take the corrective action you must take. By all means, do not ignore the presence of potential abuse without investigating and acting appropriately. Certainly never ignore the presence of abuse by failing to respond in an appropriate manner. The children in our NJBL program deserve this protection from individuals not suited to work with them.

Weather Concerns

1. **Appropriate Clothing** -- Encourage players to dress appropriately for the weather and for the possibility of changing weather. This can include being prepared for cold, wind, rain, heat, etc., and various combinations of weather conditions, such as cool and windy which could produce dangerous wind chills.
Appropriate Footwear -- Encourage players to wear appropriate footwear for extreme weather conditions, such as wet ball fields that might necessitate an extra change of socks.
2. **Lightning** -- Exercise special respect for lightning by ceasing practices and games in the presence of this potentially deadly force of nature. Be aware of existing thunderstorm watches and warnings, and be prepared to take quick action. Follow NJBL rules regarding lightning and thunder.
3. **Severe Weather** -- Be aware of severe weather watches and warnings, such as high winds, hurricanes, heavy storms, and tornadoes, and be prepared with a plan of action for this type of unique severe weather. Seek shelter in extremely sound buildings near the inner walls whenever possible.
4. **Heat** -- Respect extreme heat and high humidity conditions by providing plenty of water, sunscreen, shade, baseball caps, sunglasses, if desired, etc. Know emergency procedures for heat exhaustion and heat stroke.
5. **Traveling** -- Exercise extreme caution when traveling in severe weather. Be sure that each vehicle is adequate for travel under extreme weather conditions that might exist, such as heavy rains, snow, high winds, etc.
6. **Weather Information** -- When in doubt about changing weather conditions, communicate with an up-to-the-minute weather source, such as a local radio or television meteorologist, the National Weather Service, etc.
7. **Communication** -- Be sure to communicate severe weather information to players, their parents, spectators, umpires, etc., in a timely manner so that appropriate action can be taken when necessary.

Summary and Conclusion

This Risk Management Planning Guide has been designed for the hundreds of NJBL Baseball/Softball volunteers who dedicate countless hours to the leadership of their various NJBL teams. We know that each volunteer has a sincere interest in NJBL Baseball/Softball and the young people for whom our programs exist. We also believe that each NJBL volunteer has a genuine interest in protecting each of the participants, spectators, and other volunteers from unreasonable harm. More specifically, we believe that each volunteer has the ability to demonstrate reasonable behavior as he or she performs the various volunteer duties within the NJBL program.

The purpose of this Risk Management Planning Guide has been to facilitate the reasonably safe operation of NJBL teams. The goals of decreasing the likelihood of injuries related to the inherent risks of baseball and softball, decreasing or eliminating the likelihood of unreasonable injuries, and minimizing the extent of the injuries that do occur are all attainable goals through the mechanism of sound planning. It is with this desire to assist the planning process that this Risk Management Planning Guide has been developed.

Please contact the NJBL Baseball/Softball administrators for information on additional educational material that might be helpful to you.